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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 SANAA 002337

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [IZ](#) [YM](#) [KICC](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR'S 9/16 MEETING WITH FM QIRBI: IRAQ;
ARTICLE 98; DIPLOMATIC POUCH

REF: SANAA 1450

Classified By: Ambassador Edmund J. Hull for reasons 1.5 (d)

11. (C) Summary: In a 9/16 meeting with Ambassador, FM Qirbi said Yemen would welcome a visit by the Iraqi Governing Council "at any time." He expressed Yemeni support for early return of Iraqi sovereignty, and proposed a dialogue to engage AL member states constructively in the process. Qirbi suggested a meeting between the Arab Group and Secretary Powell on the margins of the UNGA as a possible way to open such a dialogue. In response to Ambassador's push for Yemeni action on Article 98, Qirbi offered no substantive reply but said he would be prepared to re-engage on the issue soon. After detailed discussion of the failed 8/31 diplomatic support flight, Qirbi agreed to a return flight on 10/5 and pledged full Yemeni support. Action requests paras 8 and 11. End Summary.

Yemen Days

12. (C) Ambassador began by briefing Qirbi on the success of the 9/4-5 Yemen Days cultural festival at the Smithsonian, which drew crowds far in excess of expectations. On the margins of the event Yemeni Human Rights Minister al-Soswa and former PM al-Iryani had productive meetings with senior U.S. officials, and a Yemeni business delegation also had useful contacts.

13. (C) Qirbi hailed the Yemen Days event as a significant step toward correcting Yemen's undeserved negative image. Later in the meeting he also expressed the ROYG's protest at the extreme delays and harsh treatment some of the Yemeni businessmen received at Dulles Airport. Ambassador underscored efforts the Department made to ensure smooth airport transit for people and materiel arriving in Washington for Yemen Days, and apologized for the delays and hassles that did occur. He pledged that the Embassy would in future redouble its effort to avoid security-related delays for Yemeni officials and others visiting the United States at USG invitation, but that the continuing need for heightened homeland security made this difficult to guarantee.

Iraq: Door is Open for IGC Visit to Yemen

14. (C) Ambassador noted that Deputy Secretary Armitage had raised the recent postponement of a planned visit to Yemen by representatives of the Iraqi Governing Council. Qirbi said the delay had come from the Iraqi side as a result of internal political developments and security issues. Qirbi stressed that "they are welcome at any time," and that Yemen's embassy in Baghdad was prepared to coordinate scheduling. Qirbi said he understood the IGC was studying an early visit to Qatar, Yemen and Sudan.

Qirbi: Need for U.S.-AL Dialogue on Iraq

15. (C) Qirbi expressed satisfaction with the decision by the Arab League ministerial to seat Iraqi FM Zebari. Qirbi said he had useful discussions with Zebari in Cairo, and said he hoped AL acceptance would help the IGC "get things moving" in Iraq. Yemen's position is not mere acceptance of the interim Iraqi government, but active support for constructive measures to hasten the return of full Iraqi sovereignty. This is because ROYG sees the integrity and stability of Iraq as crucial for the stability of the region.

16. (C) Accordingly, said Qirbi, now that the IGC has received "universal recognition by the Arabs" the time has come for dialogue on Iraq between AL members and the occupying authorities in Iraq. He observed that the Secretary's remarks in Baghdad, especially on the need for a UN role, had been positive, but argued that international engagement should include a role for the Arab League. The coalition should engage the Arabs in advancing the return of sovereignty, said Qirbi, and aim to keep shared national objectives, rather than narrow ethnic or religious

affiliations, at the forefront of the process inside Iraq.

17. (C) Qirbi suggested that one possible framework for opening such a dialogue would be a meeting between the Arab Group and Secretary Powell on the margins of the UNGA. In addition, Saleh might raise it with CINC Abizaid on his (9/20) visit to Yemen.

USG Visits to Yemen

18. (C) Ambassador briefed Qirbi on upcoming visits to Yemen by CINC Abizaid (9/20), FBI Director Mueller (9/28) and possibly NEA A/S Burns (10/3 or 4). FM Qirbi welcomed the visits, but noted that he would not return from the UNGA until 10/4, and asked that A/S Burns coordinate his timing to allow for that return.

Diplomatic Pouch/Support Flights

19. (C) Ambassador expressed serious USG concern over Yemen's non-cooperation with the 8/31 diplomatic support flight, stressing that Deputy Secretary Armitage had raised the issue with Iryani in Washington. After extended discussion, Qirbi agreed to the scheduling of a return flight on 10/5 and pledged full Yemeni cooperation.

Article 98: ROYG Still reviewing Options

10. (C) The Ambassador urged Qirbi to focus actively on the ICC issue and move quickly toward concluding an Article 98 agreement. He stressed the need for this important follow-up to U/S Bolton's June visit. Qirbi noted that the Yemeni Parliament had not ratified the ICC convention, and said the ROYG was still reviewing the materials provided by Embassy Sanaa (reftel and previous). He undertook to renew discussion of the issue soon with Ambassador. (Note: In a 9/15 meeting with DCM, MFA Under Secretary Hussein Taher bin Yahia noted that "several levels" of the ROYG were studying the Article 98 question. He indicated that some were concerned at the obviously one-sided benefit that such an agreement would impart, but predicted movement in the near term. End Note.)

Comment

11. (C) Despite Yemen's limited regional influence, FM Qirbi has made positive efforts on Iraq, including advocacy leading to the AL decision to seat the Iraqi delegation. We believe his proposal of a NY meeting to engage Arab states constructively in Iraq is sincere and well intended. We recommend serious consideration and welcome feedback.

HULL